

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0057
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 4341

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT BG
SUBJ: WILL THE ZIA FRONT CONTINUE?

REF: DACCA 3797

1. THE JATIYATABADI FRONT WHICH SUPPORTED PRESIDENT ZIA IN THE JUNE 3 ELECTION IS NOW CONSIDERING WHICH OF THREE COURSES THE GROUP SHOULD FOLLOW IN THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION. AND THIS IS LEADING TO A MEASURE OF SERIOUS DEBATE WITHIN THE JAGODAL SEGMENT OF WHICH ZIA IS THE PATRON, ALTHOUGH NOT A MEMBER. THE PRESIDENT'S INDECISION ON WHICH ALTERNATIVE SHOULD BE SELECTED HAS GIVEN PROPONENTS OF DIFFERING POINTS OF VIEW AN OPPORTUNITY TO AIR THESE VIEWS IN PUBLIC AND IN THE PRESS.

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2. THE THREE ALTERNATIVES ARE: (1) MERGE EACH OF THE COMPONENT PARTIES INTO A SINGLE PARTY, A LA JANATA IN INDIA BUT BEFORE THE ELECTION; (2) CONTINUE THE FRONT WITH EACH PARTY RETAINING ITS SEPARATE IDENTIFITY AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER THE VOTING; AND (3) DISSOLVE THE FRONT AND PERMIT EACH PARTY TO CAMPAIGN ON ITS OWN, WITH POSSIBLY A FEW SEAT ADJUSTMENTS TO AVOID DIRECT CONTESTS AMONG

LEADERS OF THE CONSITITUENT PARTIES.

3. THE PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS OF THE MERGER ALTERNATIVE SEEM TO BE THOSE WHO ARE NOT AT ALL SURE THAT IN A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION THE ASSUMED (AND PERHAPS EXAGGERATED) STRENGTH OF THE AWAMI DREGUE CAN BE WITHSTOOD. AMONG THESE ARE SENIOR MINISTER MASHIUR RAHMAN WHO SEES BOTH A BETTER CHANCE FOR HIS OWN LECTION (HE HAS NEVER WON IN A DIRECT CONTEST) AND A MORE IMPORTANT POSITION FOR HIMSELF IF HE CAN COVERT HIS SENIOR MINISTERSHIP INTO LEADERSHIP OF THE MERGED PARTY AND THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP. WITHIN JAGODAL ONLY OIL MINISTER ENAYETULLAH KHAN HAS BEEN IN SUPPORT OF MERGER, AND THIS HAS DRAWN SHARP CRITICISM FROM MORE CONSERVATIVE JAGODAL SENIOR MEMBERS WHO CLAIM THAT ENAYET ONLY WISHES TO SMOOTH THE WAY FOR HIS LEFTIST FRIENDS TO ENTER THE PARLIAMENT.

4. THE "GO IT ALONE" STRATEGY IS SUPPORTED BY SEVERAL KEY JAGODAL MEMBERS INCLUDING DACCA "MAYOR" ABUL HASNAT, INDUSTRIES MINISTER JAMALUDDIN AHMAD WHO IS HOPEFUL OF EMERGING AS THE "BOSS" OF CHITTAGONG, FORMER DEMOCRATIC LEAGUER OBAIDUR RAHMAN, NOW A MINISTER, AND A NUMBER OF LOCAL JAGODAL CONVENERS WHO WISH TO PRESERVE THE POSITIONS WHICH THEIR WORK IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HAS GAINED THEM. THIS GROUP, ALMOST CERTAINLY OVERESTIMATING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH OF JAGODAL, ASSERTS THAT JAGODAL

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CAN WIN A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SEATS (FEW CLAIM A MAJORITY) AND THEN DEAL FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH AFTER THE ELECTIONS TO FORM A SOLID COALITION IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT, AND, AT THE SAME TIME, ASSURE THAT A JAGODAL MEMBER IS SELECTED AS PRIME MINISTER RATHER THAN MASHIUR RAHMAN.

4. SOME MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP HAVE ALSO BEEN CRITICAL OF THE INCLUSION OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE IN THE FRONT AND THE INCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF OTHER PARTIES IN THE CABINET. THEY LOOK UPON THE MUSLIM LEAGUE AS A POTENTIAL LIABILITY FOR ITS SUPPORT OF UNITED PAKISTAN IN 1971 AND FEAR THAT THIS MAY COME UP AS AN ISSUE AS IMPORTANT TO THE AWAMI LEAGUE AS WAS THE BAKSALWICHARGE LEVIED AGAINST THE AWAMI LEAGUE BY THE PRESIDENT'S FRONT IN THE JUNE ELECTION. ON MINISTERIAL CHOICES THE COMPLAINTS ARE NOT ONLY ABOUT THE MUSLIM LEAGUERS BUT ALSO THE "LEFTISTS" OF ATHE NAP/B AND THE UNITED PEOPLE'S PARTY.

6. HOWEVER, THE BULK OF JAGODAL APPEARS TO BE WILLING TO WAIT FOR ZIA'S DECISION AND EXPECT THAT IT WILL BE TO RETAIN THE FRONT. THIS WILL MEAN (AS WOULD THE MERGER

ALTERNATIVE) A DIFFICULT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS TO ASSIGN SEATS TO EACH CONSTITUENT PARTY. MANY WHO ARE WILLING TO WAIT FOR THE DECISION, HOWEVER, POINT OUT THAT TIME IS AT A PREMIUM AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS MUST BEGIN SOON.

7. ZIA IS THUS BEING PRESSED TO TAKE A DECISION SOON. IT WILL BE FOLLOWED BY ALMOST ALL CONCERNED AS EACH JAGODAL ASPIRANT AS WELL AS THOSE FROM THE OTHER PARTIES FULLY RECOGNIZE THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE INGREDIENT IN AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN WILL BE ZIA'S COATTAILS.

8. MEANWHILE THE AWAMI LEAGUE HAS SHOWN SOME SIGNS OF PATCHING UP ITS QUARRELS AND SHOULD THE PARTY PRESENT A MORE UNITED STANCE THIS WILL LIKELY CAUSE A CLOSER
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WORKING TOGETHER AMONG THE SUPPORTERS OF ZIA.
SCHNEIDER

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